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ABSTRACT

Bloomfield Academy was different from other American Indian boarding schools. The Chickasaws had not been relegated to a reservation and had achieved a much higher level of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence than most other tribal nations. The Chickasaw Nation founded Bloomfield in 1852 not because the government demanded it but because the Chickasaw people knew that literacy training was crucial to their survival as a nation. Bloomfield was also remarkable because it was superior to schools for Whites in Indian Territory at that time, it existed as an academy long after the American common school supplanted the academy system, and it was an academy for females. Bloomfield had three different administrations--mission, tribal, and federal--and each had its own agenda. The missionaries' agenda was to Christianize and civilize. After the Civil War, the Chickasaws took full control of the school. Their agenda was to be able to compete with Whites, and the school established entrance requirements, high academic standards, and social literacy and arts programs. In 1906, the federal government terminated tribal governments and operated Bloomfield. The government's agenda was to strip students of their culture and heritage and immerse them in activities that would foster patriotism and a nationalistic spirit. Interviews with 15 former students describe life at the school during the federal period. In 1932, the school was renamed Carter Seminary, after a longtime champion of the school, and it still operates today. (Contains 154 references, biographies of interviews, notes, an index, photographs, and maps.) (TD)

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